CLAIMS

Having thus described my invention, what I claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. A method of operating a digital communication network having a plurality of nodes which have a locally hierarchical relationship, comprising the steps of:

detecting a condition at a first node and communicating the condition to a trusted second node locally higher in said hierarchical relationship;

collecting information regarding said condition through nodes at the same or higher hierarchical level as said trusted second node; and

controlling a response at said first node in response to said information.

2. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said communicating is performed over said digital communication network separately from user data communications.

3. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said communicating and said controlling step are performed by user transparent communications over said digital network.

4. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said communicating and said controlling step are performed at bit rates of at least 10 Gbps.

5. A method as recited in claim 2, wherein said communicating and said controlling step are performed preferentially to said user data communications.

6. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said controlling step establishes a virtual private network.

7. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said controlling step implements at least one of a mandatory access control policy and a discretionary access control policy.

8. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said communicating establishes a trust level for a node of said digital network.

9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said communicating establishes a secure session between contiguous nodes of said digital network.

10. A method as recited in claim 1, including the further step of detecting a foreign security policy manager connection.